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121122Z Sep 05

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 08 TEL AVIV 005597

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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
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HQ USAF FOR XXXX
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USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS](#) [KMDR](#) [MEDIA](#) [REACTION](#) [REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

1. IDF Withdrawal From Gaza
2. Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina
3. Global War on Terror

Key stories in the media:

The IDF withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, after 38 years of Israeli military rule, dominated the headlines during the weekend. The last Israeli troops left the Strip this morning at around 7:00 Israel Time.

Israel Radio quoted Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz as saying this morning that, from now on, Israel would hold the PA responsible for attacks from the Gaza Strip.

Yediot quoted the next U.S. ambassador to Israel, Richard Jones, as saying that the ball is in the Palestinian court, and that they must now prove themselves in administering Gaza, improving the Palestinians' lives, and eradicating terror. Jones met on Sunday with Israeli Consul General in New York Arye Mekel, in advance of his arrival in Israel this weekend. Yediot reported that, during his meeting with Mekel, Ambassador Jones heard briefings on the political developments in the region, and mainly about the disengagement plan. Jones reportedly congratulated Israel for its brave step, and emphasized that the Arab states must now extend economic aid to the PA.

The electronic media reported that Palestinians set fire to at least four empty synagogues in the Strip, as PA forces failed to protect them. Jerusalem Post reported that Sephardi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar received promises this week from King Mohamed VI of Morocco and Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali that they would intervene to protect synagogues in the Gaza Strip from destruction and desecration by Palestinians. Israel Radio reported that State Department Spokesperson Sean McCormack criticized the decision made by the Israeli cabinet on Sunday not to demolish the synagogues, saying that it "puts the Palestinian Authority into a situation where it may be criticized for whatever it does." On Sunday, the cabinet had voted by a huge majority to leave them intact. The media reported that on Sunday, the cabinet approved the termination of Israeli presence along the Philadelphia route. Egyptian troops started deploying there the same day. The cabinet also authorized PM Sharon, Vice Premier Shimon Peres, and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz to determine future security arrangements for passage between Gaza and Egypt.

On Sunday, Maariv reported that The Washington Post would publish an interview with Sharon that day, in which he would declare that Israel will continue to build in the large settlements despite the fact that Israel has not received U.S. approval for this.

The media reported that PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas announced last night that Israel has not yet ended the occupation of Gaza, and that "the Strip is one large prison, and the army's departure does not change this situation." The media reported that the PA's Civilian Affairs Minister Muhammad Dahlan criticized Israel's closure of the Erez crossing and the practical consequences for Palestinians of the temporary arrangement made by Israel at Kerem Shalom. Palestinian National Security Adviser Jibril Rajoub was quoted as saying in an interview with Jerusalem Post that the PA will take all necessary steps to fight terror in Gaza provided Israel withdraws completely and gives hope there will be negotiations over a Palestinian state and more pullbacks from the West Bank.

On Sunday, Jerusalem Post reported that Saudi Arabia has agreed to lift certain aspects of its boycott against Israel in an attempt to satisfy U.S. demands regarding the Saudi request to join the World Trade Organization.

All media noted, and various TV stations broadcast special programs on the fourth anniversary of 9/11. The media reported on 9/11 memorial ceremonies in the U.S. Jerusalem Post reported that Dr. Helena Kane Finn, Counselor For Public Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Israel spoke Sunday at a local ceremony on behalf of U.S. Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer. U.S. Consul General in Jerusalem Jacob Walles also spoke. Jerusalem Post reported that Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, the senior representative of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land, called on the GOI at the event to stop the "vicious cycle of violence."

On Sunday, Yediot reported that Sharon called Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Friday to congratulate him upon his reelection. Mubarak received 88 percent of the votes.

Major media quoted Iraqi President Jalal Talabani as saying Friday, during a lecture he delivered before the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy in Washington, that there is no hostility between Iraq and Israel. Talabani was responding to questions from Israeli reporters. However, Talabani reiterated his view that bilateral relations will start only when Israel withdraws to the 1967 borders and a Palestinian state is founded.

On Sunday, Maariv cited reports in the Turkish media that Israel would open interest sections within Turkish embassies in Muslim countries such as Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel is negotiating with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, to arrange a first ever meeting with Al-Thani and Sharon at the UN General Assembly this week.

Ha'aretz reported that former PM Ehud Barak officially stepped down from the race for the Labor Party chairmanship Sunday.

Leading media reported that Doron Almog, former head of the IDF's Southern Command, escaped arrest on Sunday by Britain's anti-terrorist and war crimes unit, when he remained on an aircraft that had landed at Heathrow Airport and returned with it to Israel several hours later. The allegations concerned Almog's involvement in military actions during the Intifada.

Jerusalem Post reported on humanitarian aid provided by the Jewish American community to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

----- 1. IDF Withdrawal From Gaza: -----

Summary: -----

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "The PA will have to ... carry out what is required of it according to the road map. If it does so, the chances are good that in the foreseeable future, the exit from Gaza will not be Israel's last exit from occupied territories."

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv: "The time has come to draw a border for this country, to put up a fence along it, to affix a metal gate and gather inside."

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Let no one delude himself. The IDF's freedom of action in response to terror attacks issuing from the Gaza Strip will not increase -- on the contrary."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Regardless of how the border control issues are worked out, it is already clear that the fate of Gaza is in Palestinian hands."

Block Quotes:

I. "Back to the Border of Sanity"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (September 12): "Thirty-eight years after Gaza was occupied in what most of the public still believes was a war of no choice, Israel is returning the Gaza Strip to its legal owners as they are embodied in the Palestinian Authority.... Although this was not Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's declared intention when he initiated and carried out the disengagement, the exit from the Gaza Strip is a very significant step on the long road to Israeli-Palestinian peace. Now Israel is entitled to expect that the PA will respond to the Israeli move with steps of its own that will bring peace a step closer. For this, the PA will have to promise, first and foremost, that the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel will be quiet, so that there will no longer be any need for the IDF to cross it, as well as carry out what is required of it according to the road map. If it does so, the chances are good that in the foreseeable future, the exit from Gaza will not be Israel's last exit from occupied territories."

II. "End of Gaza Era"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv (September 12): "Within just over five years, Israel has completed the final determination of two of its borders: the northern border with Lebanon, and the southern one along the Gaza Strip. The two moves were carried out unilaterally, but with international agreement and the approval of the UN. The new borders are known all over the world. What could make the new line of Gaza effective is what makes the 'blue line of Lebanon' effective: sweeping international legitimacy, global recognition, the air umbrella of the nations of the world, and the knowledge, that from now on, in the absence of occupation, the rules of the enlightened world will be enforced here.... The dream of Greater Israel has ended, buried dishonorably, hastily, almost without any suffering. The next prime minister, whoever it will be ('even Bibi') will continue the process. The time has come to draw a border for this country, to put up a fence along it, to affix a metal gate and gather inside."

III. "No Illusions"

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (September 12): "Let no one delude himself. The IDF's freedom of action in response to terror attacks issuing from the Gaza Strip will not increase -- on the contrary.... The impact of an artillery shell in a populated area of the Gaza Strip, which is one of the densest regions on the face of the planet, will create a human and political catastrophe. The [IDF's] Judge Advocate General will immediately declare this a 'disproportionate' action. No one will authorize such a response. Artillery can be fired at open areas. But Qassam rockets and mortar shells are not fired from open areas, but rather from yards, from populated neighborhoods. Then how exactly can the sentence 'we too have mortars' be backed up?.... An electronic wall has been built facing Gaza. The Air Force is planning an electronic ceiling that will enable it continuous monitoring of Gaza from the air, intelligence gathering and immediate responsive fire. It will take a long time until this ceiling is built and becomes effective. Until then, we will have to invest a great deal in protective measures."

IV. "Gaza's Gate"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (September 12): "Since the launching of Oslo, Israel has been saying to the PA, 'Take a state, please.' Only now is it beginning to dawn on the international community that it is the PA, not Israel, which has been

saying no.... If the Palestinians decide to start building the peaceful state they claim they want, Israel will not only refrain from interfering, but stands ready and able to do much to help. Throughout Oslo's heyday, Israeli ministers cooked up elaborate plans for economic cooperation through industrial parks and international-financed joint megaprojects. Under Arafat, the PA would have none of it. Mahmoud Abbas also seems to be in no hurry to engage Israel economically, despite claiming that improving Palestinian lives is his top priority. Regardless of how the border control issues are worked out, it is already clear that the fate of Gaza is in Palestinian hands. Now we will see if they are ready to make constructive use of it."

12. Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina:

Summary:

Yahad-Meretz Knesset Member Yossi Sarid wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "George Bush is without a doubt the most terrifying president America has ever had.... Who is going to tell a shepherd what is good for his flock while it is drowning in a flood?"

Block Quotes:

"After Bush -- the Deluge"

Yahad-Meretz Knesset Member Yossi Sarid wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (September 12): "George Bush is without a doubt the most terrifying president America has ever had.... When there is a messianic vision composed of faith-based pie-in-the-sky, the earth seems to be jolted off its axis and begins to spin out of control.... Instead of running the world and its inhabitants, as one may expect of the leader of the free world, Bush acts as someone who is reinventing the world on a mission from God.... What [does] Bush ... care if the ozone layer is disintegrating, the greenhouse effect is intensifying, the oceans are warming up, the desert is expanding not only in Africa and Asia but also in Europe, and the number of hungry is growing by the hundreds of millions?.... It may very well be that the warming of the oceans contributed to Katrina, but who is going to tell a shepherd what is good for his flock while it is drowning in a flood?"

13. Global War on Terror:

Summary:

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Contrary to forecasts by bin Laden (and by the part of Western public opinion that is attracted by dreams of the decline of America) ... the American empire hasn't disintegrated."

Block Quotes:

"Islamic Terror's Largest Attack Against Itself"

Chief Economic Editor and senior columnist Sever Plotker wrote in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (September 11): "Now, as [during the fall of Communism,] the United States, in particular its president, who is imbued with a militant ideology, has played a key role in pushing for democratization [of the Middle East]. Then and now, its enemies haven't properly assessed the natural attraction of democracy.... [But] positive developments can still be reversed; fanatic Islam is far from being vanquished. It has actually been strengthening in Middle Eastern areas occupied by the U.S. and its charm is great among young Arabs from Western Europe, who lack identity.... Contrary to forecasts by bin Laden (and by the part of Western public opinion that is attracted by dreams of the decline of America) ... the American empire hasn't disintegrated. What has -- gradually -- been falling apart is the evil empire of the Islamic fanatics. In a sober retrospective outlook, the planes that were made

to crash four years ago into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon represented Islamic terror's largest attack against itself."

KURTZER